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LETTER DATED 13 APRIL 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to enclose herewith the statement by the Rwandese Government on refugees dated 6 April 1995.

This statement demonstrates the good will of the Rwandese Government in encouraging the return of the refugees.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Manzi BAKURAMUTSA
Ambassador
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Annex

Statement by the Rwandese Government on refugees dated 6 April 1995

The war, the massacres and the genocide which plunged Rwanda into mourning, especially during the period from April to July 1994, gave rise to hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and caused millions of refugees to flee beyond our frontiers.

These, regrettably, were in addition to more than 1 million former Rwandese refugees which the turbulent history of our country had forced to flee and to remain in exile.

Immediately after the war, the genocide and the massacres, the total number of refugees - both former and new refugees - as well as internally displaced persons had been estimated at about 3.5 million, or the equivalent of 50 per cent of the population of this country before April 1994.

On 19 July 1994 a government of national unity, incorporating all the political parties which were not involved in the massacres and the genocide, was formed. It immediately undertook a broad awareness campaign aimed at the return of the displaced persons and refugees.

The Rwandese Government considers that the return of the refugees - both former and new - is an inalienable right and constitutes a factor for peace, unity and national reconciliation.

Currently, about 1.2 million refugees, 50 per cent of whom are new refugees, have returned. Nevertheless, Rwanda estimates that there are still more than 2 million persons in exile and about 300,000 internally displaced persons.

Despite the appeal repeatedly made by the central authorities of the country, the agents of these crimes against humanity continue to engage in acts of intimidation against the Rwandese refugees who wish to return to their country. They clearly want to keep them hostage and utilize them in an attempt to escape justice.

The Rwandese Government considers that the return of the Rwandese refugees remains one of its priorities. It has therefore decided on a number of actions, including the following:

1. Continuation of contacts with responsible officials in the countries in which our compatriots took refuge in order to facilitate their return.

In this context, the Government has negotiated and concluded tripartite agreements with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and the countries which are sheltering the refugees. Such agreements already exist with Zaire and Burundi. Contacts are currently in progress with the United Republic of Tanzania with a view to the signing of a similar agreement.

2. A request to the host countries to segregate innocent persons from those responsible for genocide and massacres.

The people who are free from any wrongdoing wish to return to their country. Their segregation from the criminals would greatly facilitate the speedy return to Rwanda of hundreds of thousands of innocent people currently being held hostage by the criminals.

3. Continuation of the policy of promoting awareness both within and beyond our frontiers concerning the need for the return of the refugees.

A campaign for reception and national reconciliation is being conducted by the authorities and the government mass media in order to support and facilitate the return of the refugees.

4. Promotion of the return of the refugees. The Rwandese Government has set up an interministerial commission entrusted with settling lawsuits over properties which were abandoned by the refugees and temporarily occupied by other persons. The Rwandese Government reaffirms the constitutional right to private property.

It is moreover the responsibility of the Government to find sites where refugees who have nowhere to go can settle and also to help them in resettlement and reintegration into society with the assistance of the international community.

5. Identification of sites for resettlement and areas for the settlement of former refugees.

The Rwandese Government has already defined several resettlement sites both in the countryside and in towns in order to receive the refugees. Instructions have been issued for finding other resettlement sites.

6. Integration of the members of the former government forces.

The first elements of the Rwandese armed forces who broke ranks with their colleagues and who are not guilty of massacres and genocide have received ad hoc training and have been reintegrated into the national army.

7. Pursuit of operations for assistance to the displaced persons and to the refugees once they have been repatriated or in connection with their property.

These provisions have been supplemented by the setting up of the commission for repatriation of the refugees provided for in the Arusha Peace Agreement and the establishment of a unit for coordination of humanitarian assistance attached to the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Social Integration, and by the gradual strengthening of security conditions, which will, inter alia, take the form of:

- Acceleration of the process of setting up the local administration;

- The deployment of international human-rights observers in the field;

- Reorganization of the judicial system;

- Eradication of any temptation to take personal revenge;

- Respect for procedures concerning the arrest and detention of those suspected of involvement in the genocide and the massacres;

- The effective establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the prosecution of crimes against humanity and genocide committed in Rwanda;

- The speedy and equitable trial of those responsible for the genocide and the massacres.

The Rwandese Government also intends to set up, with the support of the international community, centres for the reception and transit of refugees who return to Rwanda with a view to inspiring their self-confidence, caring for and identifying them, and subsequently organizing transport and assistance in terms of food, building materials and agricultural inputs.

These transit centres will comprise a service for the registration of persons repatriated and of their property, a service for the distribution of humanitarian assistance, an orientation service to determine sites for resettlement of those repatriated who do not possess land and the regions from which the new refugees originated. Transit through these centres will have to be brief, with a maximum stay of one week.

The refugees who require resettlement will pass through a reception centre situated near their resettlement site.

This centre will serve as a place for registration, distribution of food aid, medicines and building materials until such time as each family can complete the building of its dwelling on a parcel of land allocated to it by the Administration.

The Rwandese Government would like to urge the neighbouring countries which are sheltering refugees and also the international community to take note of the following:

1. Innocent persons in the camps should be segregated from criminals guilty of massacres and genocide in order to enable the former to return to Rwanda;

2. Refugees who do not wish to return to the country should be kept at a distance from the frontiers of Rwanda;

3. There should be collaboration with the Rwandese tribunals and the International Criminal Tribunal in the arrest and transfer of those guilty of the massacres and genocide, wherever they may be;

4. Humanitarian, technical and financial assistance in behalf of Rwandese refugees should be continued.

In this regard, the Rwandese Government welcomes the success of the consolidated appeal launched on 20 January 1995 in Geneva for the benefit of Rwandese refugees at the initiative of the United Nations system.

The Rwandese Government, as it has constantly been doing, once again launches a solemn appeal to all Rwandese refugees to return to their motherland with a view to participating in the reconstruction of the country.

It is inadmissible that Rwandese should be forced to leave the country which had sheltered them in order to take refuge once again in another neighbouring country rather than to re-enter Rwanda. This is with particular reference to those Rwandese citizens who have been held up in recent days at the frontier between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Rwandese Government takes this opportunity to reiterate its gratitude to the countries which are sheltering its refugees and to the international community, especially the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, while at the same time urging them to pursue this humanitarian action with a view to enabling the Rwandese refugees to return, resettling them and contributing to their social and economic reintegration.